

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 (ISO) W

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O 230939Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9481

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8105

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FOR SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN

1. AMBASSADOR TOON AND I MET WITH RABIN ON DECEMBER 22 AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. PRESENT ON THE ISRAELI SIDE WERE DIRECTOR GENERAL EIRAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL MFA EVRON, APPOINTMENT SECRETARY MIZRACHI AND GENERAL LIOR.

2. AFTER CONVEYING YOUR REGARDS, I TOLD RABIN THAT THE PURPOSE OF MY MEETINGS IN ARAB CAPITALS, ESPECIALLY DAMASCUS, WAS TO MAKE CLEAR OUR APPROACH TO THE JANUARY 12 UNSC DEBATE BEFORE THEY FORMULATED PRECISE POSITIONS. I HAD TOLD THE ARABS THAT WE WOULD OPPOSE ANY ATTEMPT IN COUNCIL TO CHANGE UNSC RESOLUTIONS 242 OR 338, TO FORCE PLO PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS IN ANY FORM, AND THE TRANSFER OF NEGOTIATIONS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL; WE WOULD USE OUR VETO TO PREVENT AN OUTCOME WHICH WOULD ALTER THE EXISTING FRAMEWORK AND BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

3. RABIN PROCEEDED TO ANALYZE SYRIAN OBJECTIVES. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, HAVE THREE GOALS: TO CHANGE UNSC RESOLUTION 242 DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY; TO TRANSFER THE MIDDLE EAST ISSUE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL; AND TO MAKE THE PLO AN EQUAL PARTICIPANT IN NEGOTIATIONS. IN FORMULATING THEIR PROPOSAL FOR THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE, THE SYRIANS WILL USE THE LANGUAGE

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OF THE NOVEMBER 30 RESOLUTION CALLING FOR NEGOTIATIONS BASED

ON "ALL RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS". THEY WILL CALL FOR ADOPTION OF UNGA RESOLUTION 3325 AS ONE OF THE RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS THEREBY SIDETRACKING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IN FAVOR OF THE COMMITTEE OF 20 WHICH IS ASSIGNED TO REPORT BACK TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL WITHIN SIX MONTHS.

4. CONTINUING HIS ANALYSIS, RABIN SAID THAT THE SYRIANS SUPPORTED BY THE SOVIETS WERE GOING BACK TO THE POSITION THEY HAD ADOPTED AFTER 1967 AND IN THE FIRST MONTHS AFTER THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR--REJECTION OF UNSC RESOLUTION 242 AND REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE SYRIANS, HE RECALLED, HAD REFUSED TO ALLOW JARRING TO COME TO DAMASCUS AND AFTER OCTOBER 1973 HAD REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. SYRIA NOW WANTS TO SHOW THE ARAB STATES THAT IT AND NOT EGYPT IS THE PRINCIPAL ARAB COUNTRY AND THAT THE SOVIETS ARE THE MAIN SUPERPOWER IN THE AREA. THIS IS A CHALLENGE TO ALL US EFFORTS TO DATE. THERE SHOULD BE NO COMPROMISES WHICH WOULD ALTER THE EXISTING BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. IN ORDER TO KEEP THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS ALIVE, THERE MUST BE A CLEAR-CUT RESULT AND THE DEBATE MUST NOT BE PROLONGED. THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME FROM THE ISRAELI VIEW IS THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL EITHER ADOPT A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON THE BASIS OF RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 OR ADOPT NO RESOLUTION. ANY OTHER OUTCOME WILL RELEASE ISRAEL FROM ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER UNSC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 BECAUSE THEY WILL EITHER NO LONGER BE IN EXISTENCE OR WILL HAVE BEEN FUNDEMENTALLY ALTERED.

5. RABIN THEN PROCEEDED TO ANALYZE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE:

A. THE US STANDS FIRM AND BLOCKS ANY CHANGE IN THE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS CASE THERE WILL EITHER BE A DEADLOCK, WHICH IS MOST LIKELY, OR THE SYRIANS WILL FOLLOW THE EGYPTIANS EXAMPLE BY SEEKING RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH PLO PARTICIPATION.

B. IF THE US DOES NOT BLOCK THE SRIAN INITIATIVE, THERE WILL BE NO GENEVA CONFERENCE BECAUSE ISRAEL WILL
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NOT PARTICIPATE.

RABIN WENT ON TO WARN AGAINST A POSSIBLE SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE PLO WILLINGNESS TO GO TO GENEVA AS SIGNIFYING PLO ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL. HE ADDED THAT HE SAW NO CHANGE AT THIS TIME IN THE PLO POSITION REGARDING ISRAEL. I CONFIRMED THAT OUR POSITION ON THE PLO REMAINED AS IT WAS OUTLINED IN THE SEPTEMBER MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WHICH RABIN

REMINDED US IS NOT RPT NOT THE SAME AS THE ISRAELI POSITION.

6. RABIN THEN STATED THAT ISRAEL HAD HEARD RUMORS THAT SYRIA HAD TRIED TO CONVINCE JORDAN TO ESTABLISH A SYRIAN/JORDAN/PLO CONFEDERATION FOR NEGOTIATING PURPOSES. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, APPEARED MORE READY THAN ANYONE ELSE TO INVOLVE HUSSEIN IN NEGOTIATIONS. THE PURPOSE OF SUCH A TRIANGULAR CONFEDERATION WOULD BE TO ALLOW ASAD TO DECLARE THAT HIS MAIN INTEREST AT PRESENT IS NOT THE GOLAN HEIGHTS BUT RATHER A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. RABIN ADDED THAT HUSSEIN, ACCORDING TO THE ISRAELI INFORMATION, HAD TURNED DOWN THE SYRIAN PROPOSAL AND WAS HOLDING TO THE POSITION ADOPTED AT THE RABAT CONFERENCE. I SAID THAT I ASLO HAD NO INDICATION THAT JORDAN WAS CONSIDERING A MOVE SUCH AS HE HAD OUTLINED. RABIN WENT ON TO NOTE THAT JORDAN RELIES ON ISRAEL AND THE US TO PREVENT THE PLO FROM ASSUMING A REAL ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AT THE SAME TIME, HE NOTED, THE JORDANIANS HAD ESTABLISHED A DEGREE OF MILITARY COOPERATION WITH SYRIA. A JOINT EXERCISE WOULD BE HELD DECEMBER 23 IN SOUTHERN SYRIAN IN WHICH HEADQUARTERS ELEMENTS OF THE TWO JORDANIAN ARMORED BRIGADES OF THE FIFTH ARMORED DIVISION WOULD COME UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE THIRD SYRIAN MECHANIZED DIVISION. THE PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE WAS TO COORDINATE JORDANIAN GROUND SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN OPERATIONS ALONG THE LINES OF COOPERATION ADOPTED IN THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR. AT A FURTHER POINT IN THE CONVERSATION, RABIN ASKED WHETHER I HAD DISCUSSED THE LATEST JORDANIAN/SYRIAN COMMUNIQUE IN MY TALKS IN AMMAN. HE NOTED THAT IT INCLUDED HIGHLY CRITICAL REFERENCES TO SINAI II. I REPLIED THAT I HAD MADE CLEAR THAT WE WERE NOT PLEASED WITH THE COMMUNIQUE AND THAT IN REPLY THE JORDANIANS HAD TOLD ME THAT THEY HAD FELT REASONABLY SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME SINCE THEY HAD GOTTEN THE SYRIANS TO GIVE UP EVEN TOUGHER
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LANGUAGE.

7. I TOLD RABIN THAT I HAD MADE CLEAR IN AMMAN CAIRO AND JIDDA, AS WELL AS IN DAMASCUS, THE RISKS OF A RESOLUTION SUCH AS SYRIANS SEEMED TO HAVE IN MIND. WE THEN DISCUSSED THE EGYPTIAN POSITION. I NOTED THAT THE EGYPTAIN VIEW WAS THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD TRY TO GET THE MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE OUT OF THE DEBATE BUT THAT NOTHING MUCH WOULD COME OF THE DEBATE ITSELF. I SAID THAT IN MY VIEW EGYPT WOULD NOT GET TOUT IN FRONT, HOWEVER, IN TRYING TO BLOCK THE SYRIAN APPROACH. EGYPT WILL TRY TO MAKE ITS OWN RECORD AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO PROTECT ITS POSITION. SADAT'S POSITION REMAINED

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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FOR SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

BASICALLY UNCHANGED--I.E., HE SUPPORTED 242/338, THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AN FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF SINAI II. WHATEVER HE WOULD SAY IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE SHOULD NOT BE READ AS A CHANGE OF EGYPT'S POSITION. RABIN REPLIED THAT FOR EGYPT NOT TO OPPOSE THE SYRIAN INITIATIVE WOULD BE ONE MATTER; BUT IF IT TOOK THE LEAD ALONG WITH THE SYRIANS, THIS WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED IN SINAI II. OPEN EGYPTIAN SUPPORT FOR THE SYRIANS WOULD LEAD TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE KNESSET AND A DEMAND FOR ISRAEL NOT TO CARRY OUT THE IMPLENENTATION OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT. RABIN ADDED THAT THESE INITIATIVES WOULD PROBABLY BE DEFEATED BUT THAT THEY COULD CREATE GRAVE DIFFICULTIRES. I EMPHASIZED THAT SADAT FELT ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE AND HENCE CONCERNED TO PROTECT HIS OWN POSITION.

8. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO THE SOVIET ROLE, RABIN SAID THAT HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT TH SOVIETS WERE UP TO. ON THE ONE HAND THEY HAD CALLED FOR THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IN THEIR NOTE TO THE US; ON THE OTHER HAND THE SOVIETS HAD COORDINATED WITH THE SYRIANS IN PUSHING THROUGH THE NOVEMBER 30 RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE I REPLIED THAT IT WAS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT PLEASED ABOUTTRANSFERRING NEGOTIATIONS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND ARE NOT IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH THE SYRIANS ON THIS. THEY MIGHT HAVE FELT FORCED TO TAKE THIS

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COURSE IN ORDER NOT TO LOSE THEIR INFLUENCE IN SYRIA. AS THEIR NOTE MADE CLEAR, THEY WANTED THE GENEVA CONFERENCE RECONVENED AND HAD PROPOSED BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH US FOR THIS END.

9. RABIN THEN ASKED ME TO DESCRIBE THE MOOD IN THE ARAB CAPITALS. IN REPLY I REVIEWED THE IMPRESSIONS I HAD COLLECTED DURING MY TRIP. I TOLD HIM THAT THE SYRIANS FELT THAT THE HAD THE INITIATIVE AND WERE GUIDED BY THEIR DESIRE TO ISOLATE AND PRESSURE EGYPT. AS REGARDS JORDAN, HUSSEIN HAD SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP. MOREOVER, HE HAD DETACHED HIMSELF FROM THE QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITHOUT COMPLETELY CLOSING THE DOOR TO IT BY INDICATING THAT JORDAN MIGHT ATTEND AS A CONFRONTATION STATE BUT NOT TO NEGOTIATE ON BEHALF OF WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. THE SAUDIS NOW HAD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WAS AT STAKE IN THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE. I NOTED THAT MY DISCUSSIONS IN JIDDA FOCUSED ON SAUDI CONCERN ABOUT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US AS A RESULT OF CONGRESSIOAL ACTIVITY AGAINST SAUDI BOYCOTT AND VISA POLICIES.

10. RETURNING TO THE ISSUE OF THE JANUARY 12 UNSC DEBATE, RABIN NOTED THAT IT WOULD ALTER SIGNIFICANTLY THE WHOLE CONTEXT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. IN INTER-ARAB RELATIONS, THE SYRIANS ARE TRYING TO FORCE TH OTHER ARAB STATES TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE SYRIAN AND THE EGYPTAIN APPROACH TO THE ARAB/ISRAELI DISPUTE. IF EGYPT HELPS TO BLOCK THE SYRIAN CAMPAIGN IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL, THIS WOULD IMPROVE EGYPT'S STANDING IN THE ARAB WORLD AND REDUCE THAT OF SYRIA. A US VETO WOULD SHOW THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE COURSE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, NAMELY, THE PATH THAT WE HAVE BEEN ON SO FAR. I OBSERVED THAT WE ALSO HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE, NOTING THAT THE SYRIANS HAD SHOWN NO INTEREST IN THE NEGOTIATING PROPOSALS THAT WE HAVE RAISED SO FAR. RABIN REPLIED THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT REVEAL NOW WHAT THEIR POSITION WILL BE AFTER A US VETO. AT THE SAME TIME, HE NOTED THE SYRIANS ARE NOT IN THE SAME POSITION THAT THEY WERE IN AT THE TIME OF THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. THEN THEY NEEDED A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION; THIS IS NOT THE CASE TODAY. THE SYRIANS MAY GO BACK TO THE POSITION THAT THEY HAD ADOPTED BEFORE AND

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RIGHT AFTER THE OCTOBER WAR. THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO BRING EGYPT BACK TO ITS PRE-OCTOBER WAR STAND.

11. I REPEATED MY QUESTION AS TO WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE. RABIN ANALYZED THE SITUATION AS FOLLOWS: EGYPT WILL NOT AGREE TO AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT BY ITSELF. JORDAN IS NOT A PARTNER FOR NEGOTIATIONS. SYRIA, BY NEUTRALIZING JORDAN AT THE RABAT CONFERENCE AND ISOLATING EGYPT NOW, HAS PROMOTED ITS OBJECTIVE OF BLOCKING THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND SEEKING TO SHIFT THE LOCUS OF NEGOTIATIONS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL WITH PLO PARTICIPATION. IF THEY CANNOT ACCOMPLISH THIS, THEY WILL PREFER A STALEMATE WHICH MIGHT LEAD THE US TO CHANGE ITS POSITION AND EVENTUALLY LEAD EGYPT IN 1977, IF NOT IN 1976, TO CHANGE ITS PRESENT ORIENTATION. THE SYRIANS WOULD BE ABLE TO DESTROY THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK EVEN IF THE US APPLIES ITS VETO. I AGREED THAT THAT WAS A RISK, TO WHICH RABIN REPLIED THAT WITHOUT THE VETO ISRAEL WOULD NOT BE A PARTY TO THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE FRAMEWORK WOULD SIMILARLY BE DESTROYED.

12. RABIN THEN ASKED ME WHETHER THE SYRIANS HAD DISCUSSED THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. REPLIED THAT KHADDAM HAD TOLD ME THAT THE SYRIANS HAD NOT YET DECIDED WHAT TO DO AND WERE CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN CONSULTATIONS WITH VARIOUS LEBANESE LEADERS TO SEE IF A BASIS EXISTED FOR A POLITICAL COMPROMISE. I THEN REVIEWED AMBASSADOR GODLEY'S ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION. RABIN REPLIED THAT ISRAEL HAD INFORMATION THAT THE RESISTANCE FRONT (AS HE CALLED IT) OF JABRIL, HAWATMA AND HABASH WAS VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT DISTURBANCES. TWO MONTHS AGO THE ISRAELIS HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION THAT THE JABRIL GROUP WAS PREPARING TO LAUNCH RUBBER BOATS ARMED WITH KATYUSHAS FROM TYRE AGAINST THE BEIRUT WATERFRONT. THE ISRAELI NAVY HAD INTERVENED AND SUNK THESE BOATS.

13. RABIN THEN NOTED THAT DAMASCUS HAD JUST ANNOUNCED THAT ASAD WOULD MEET WITH THE SHAH ON DECEMBER 28 AND ASKED WHETHER THE SHAH WAS AWARE OF OUR VIEWS ON THE UPCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE. I SAID THAT I WOULD RECOMMEND TO YOU THAT WE SHOULD BRIEF THE SHAH FULLY ON OUR VIEWS BEFORE ASAD GETS TO TEHRAN. IN CLOSING I EMPHASIZED OUR
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DESIRE THAT RABIN NOT DISCUSS THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS MEETING WITH THE CABINET IN ORDER TO AVOID LEAKS AND MY HOPE THAT WE COULD IN FUTURE DEAL WITH THE ISSUES FACING US WITHOUT A CONFRONTATION ATMOSPHERE. RABIN IN REPLY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE ISRAELI POSITION AGAINST PARTICIPATION IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL WAS COMPLETELY CLEAR. I ANSWERED THAT I HOPED IT WAS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT IN OUR VIEW THIS WAS A MISTAKE. RABIN ADDED THAT IF WE APPLY THE VETO THERE WILL NOT BE A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE, CAT-C, MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV08105
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751217/aaaaaoyi.tel
Line Count: 331
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <07 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, (RABIN, YITZHAK), (ATHERTON, ALFRED L JR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006